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United States
Department of
Agriculture

Prepared by

Food Safety
and Quality
Service

Food News for Consumers

September 1980

USDA's Food Safety and Quality Service:

- Inspects and analyzes domestic and imported meat, poultry, and meat and poultry products;
- Establishes ingredient standards and approves recipes and labels for processed meat and poultry products;
- Inspects and analyzes liquid, dried, and frozen egg products;
- Establishes grade standards for fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products, and provides grading services for these foods on request;
- Monitors the food industry for violations of inspection and grading laws; and
- Buys food for the USDA school lunch program and other food assistance programs.

Hot Dogs, Other Meats Free of Nitrosamines

Hot dogs, corned beef, ham, and most other nitrite-cured meat products do not form confirmable levels of nitrosamines when cooked, according to studies published in the Federal Register June 27.

Most of the cured products tested do not contain confirmable nitrosamines when fried, broiled, boiled, baked, or microwaved. Nevertheless, USDA will continue to gather information on those products and, if unexpected problems are found, will take appropriate action.

For more information: Press release #1296-80 (6-26-80).

USDA Wants to Test Dry Cured Bacon

Recent studies show that a significant portion of dry cured bacon is adulterated with confirmable levels of nitrosamines so USDA is proposing to expand its bacon testing program to include dry cured bacon. The current testing program, started in Dec. 1978, covers only bacon made by pumping liquid cures into pork bellies, the most common type of bacon. (See "Food News for Consumers," Jan. 1980, page 4.)

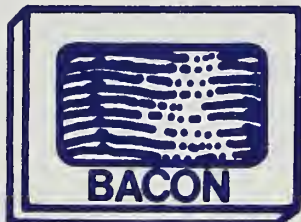
Comments on the proposal to test dry cured bacon are due Sept. 25. The proposal was published in the June 25 Federal Register.

Surveys on a third kind of bacon--that made by immersing pork bellies into cures--indicate that a nitrosamine problem may exist. Samples are being taken, and further action will depend on the findings. Together, immersion and dry cured bacon account for no more than about 5 percent of the bacon on the market.

For more information: Press Release #1548-80 (8-5-80).



Appeals Court Upholds USDA Right to Regulate Nitrite Use in Bacon



On July 31, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia affirmed the Feb. 5, 1979, district court decision that permitted USDA to continue to allow the use of nitrite in bacon.

Public Citizen, a nonprofit public interest group, had petitioned the court to rule that nitrites are "unsafe" food additives under the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. The judge ruled, however, that nitrite use in bacon is exempted from provisions of the law because USDA had approved the use of nitrite in bacon as a color fixative and preservative prior to the 1958 Food Additive Amendment.

Noting that "some believe that nitrites cause cancer while others claim nitrites are needed to prevent botulism," the judge ruled that USDA had acted lawfully in its regulation of nitrite.

Consumer Input Wanted on Food Label Format



When asked in 1978 what they want from food labels, consumers told the government, "more"--more information about ingredients and nutrition. USDA's Food Safety and Quality Service, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) Bureau of Consumer Protection are now implementing a plan to provide more informative food labels. And because label information is most useful when it is easy to read and understand, the agencies have also launched a program to improve label formats. Your comments are invited.

Suggestions for design ideas should be sent to FDA by Sept. 8. Recommendations should include, but not be limited to, schemes for organizing nutrition information (such as pie charts or bar graphs) and ingredient information, considerations of layout and type size, and the use of colors and symbols. The public's suggestions will be incorporated into a series of alternative label formats which are being developed by the professional design firm of Robert P. Gersin Associates, Inc., under contract to FDA.

The new designs will be evaluated through consumer research before the most effective formats are selected. Throughout the two-year research program, the agencies will conduct a series of four informal meetings to keep the public involved and informed.

How to Obtain Free Copies

Single free copies of press releases, Federal Register reprints, studies, fact sheets, and publications mentioned in the FSQS section of this newsletter are available from regional information offices across the country (see page 14) or from FSQS Information, Room 3606-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Phone: (202) 447-5223.

Where to Send Comments

Send your comments on proposals in the FSQS section to: Regulations Coordination Division, Room 2637-S, FSQS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Usually two copies are requested. Be sure to identify the proposal you are commenting on by referring to the title of informal proposals or, for formal proposals, the date of publication in the Federal Register.

Tips on Writing Comments

For tips on how to give your comments more weight, write for the FSQS brochure called "Public Participation: Getting Involved in FSQS" (June 1980).

Consumer Input continued



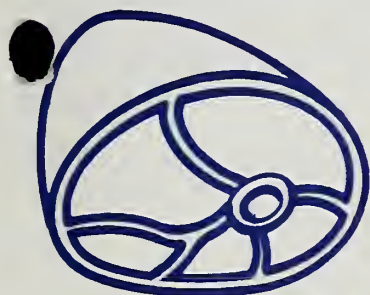
Gersin Associates will report its progress at the first public meeting, to be held October 6, at 9 a.m. in the Department of Health and Human Services auditorium, 330 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. The dates and locations of the other three meetings will be announced later.

To be sure your comments are considered in the label design phase of the program, mail them by Sept. 8 to the FDA Hearing Clerk (HFA-305), Rm. 4-62, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Md. 20857.

To notify FDA of your intention to participate in the first public meeting or to obtain additional information, contact Raymond C. Stokes, Division of Consumer Studies (HFF-240), Bureau of Foods, FDA, 200 C St., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20204; phone: (202) 245-1475.



Stay of "Turkey Ham" Ruling Asked



USDA has filed a motion seeking a stay of the July 3 court order that would stop the sale of an all-turkey product marketed as "turkey ham, cured turkey thigh meat." USDA has asked the court for one year to verify that the labeling of that product is not misleading. The judge who made the July 3 order said no survey had been made to determine whether the labeling might mislead a substantial number of consumers into believing the product contains pork meat.

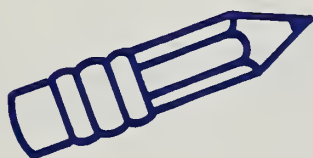
The USDA regulation allowing the product to be labeled "turkey ham" went into effect Oct. 1, 1979. The one year stay would avoid withdrawal or relabeling of "turkey ham" already in the marketplace, actions that would be a financial burden to the industry.

On July 25, the American Meat Institute, the National Pork Producers Council, and other pork producers--who originally sought the order to prevent the sale of "turkey ham"--filed papers opposing USDA's request for a year's stay. They argued that four months should be sufficient.

As of Aug. 12, the judge has not issued his decision on USDA's request.



New Net Weight Proposal

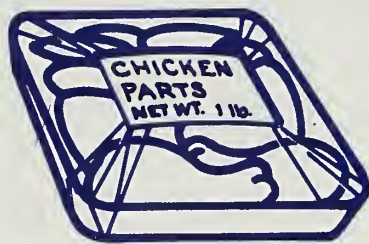


All meat and poultry products for retail sale carry net weight statements on their labels. The accuracy of the statements is of concern not only to consumers, but particularly to USDA, which assures that all meat and poultry products are labeled accurately and clearly.

On Aug. 8, USDA proposed new net weight labeling regulations for meat and poultry products in order to (1) ensure accurate information about the contents of containers, (2) provide specific net weight standards that state and local authorities can enforce at the retail level, and (3) establish uniformity with the net weight labeling regulations of the Food and Drug Administration (Department of Health and Human Services) for other food products. Comments on the proposal are due Nov. 6.

Present net weight regulations allow "reasonable variations" from the weight shown on the label. However, "reasonable" is not defined, making it difficult for regulatory authorities to enforce the regulations at retail. The new proposal would remedy this by providing numerical allowable variations and specific sampling procedures for enforcement purposes.

Net Weight continued



Under the proposal, net weight is defined as the total weight of the package and contents minus the weight of packaging materials. The Department has not decided whether liquid absorbed by the packaging should or should not be included in the net weight. Both alternatives are proposed. USDA will make a decision on this issue after reviewing the comments. Usable liquids that drain from products and are not absorbed by the packaging would be included in the product's net weight. However, the National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection recommended the Department offer the alternative of a drained weight (product only) standard. While a specific alternative has not been proposed, USDA will consider any comments received on drained weight in determining a final rule. Non-usable packing media such as water, brine, and vinegar would not be included in the net weight.

The proposal is based on a review of the comments received on two earlier net weight proposals and on net weight studies made by the General Accounting Office and USDA's Economics, Statistics, and Cooperatives Service.

For more information: Press Release #1539-80 (8-4-80) and the backgrounder on net weight labeling.

New Meat Grading Regulations Adopted



The Department is issuing new regulations to strengthen the federal meat grading program and to provide for more uniform application of grade standards to cattle carcasses. The new regulations, which will become effective Oct. 6, are substantially the same as those proposed Oct. 16, 1979.

Under the new regulations, meat will generally be graded only as carcasses or sides and only at the plant in which the animals are slaughtered or initially chilled. Veal and calf will be graded only after the hide is removed and only in the plant where such removal occurs.

The new regulations include other changes and were published in Aug. 5 Federal Register. The revisions are technical in nature and define more specifically the circumstances under which meat can be graded.

For more information: Press Release #1538-80 (8-4-80).

How to Report Food Poisoning

If you suspect food poisoning from meat or poultry, contact your physician or local public health authority. If you have any other questions about meat or poultry, contact the regional information office nearest you (see page 14) or FSQS Information, USDA, Room 1160-S, Washington, D.C. 20250; phone (202) 447-9113.

Public health officials and physicians should report possible (in their judgment) cases of food poisoning from meat or poultry to USDA's Meatborne Hazard Control Center, FSQS, USDA, Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, Md. 20705; phone (301) 345-6888.

Advisory Committee Considers Residue Program

The National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection met in Washington July 29 and 30 to consider USDA proposals for improving the Department's chemical residue control program.

The committee was told of plans to better prevent, detect, and control toxic chemicals that can enter the nation's food supply. In addition to emphasizing the detection and control of chemical contaminations, the Department plans to put much more emphasis on educating farmers and others about the hazards involved with toxic chemicals.

Advisory Committee continued

Educational programs will be developed with cooperation from state agriculture departments and agricultural extension services. The cooperation of the Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency also will be sought in developing many facets of the residue program.

Committee members agreed that additional effort should be put into controlling residues in meat and poultry products; however, some members questioned whether the proposals would provide adequate resources for detecting and preventing chemical contaminations at the food source as well as at processor and consumer levels.

Other topics discussed at the meeting:

- FSQS' 1980 legislative proposals;
- monitoring nitrosamine in dry-cured bacon and USDA's report on nitrosamine levels in cured products;
- surveys on salmonella in poultry and pork sausages;
- the USDA net weight proposal; and
- recent designation of state inspection services by the federal meat and poultry inspection program.

For more information: Press Releases #1368-80 (7-7-80) and #1522-80 (7-31-80).

New Test for Fermented Sausages

USDA scientists have developed a fast, inexpensive way to test sausages for a byproduct (thermonuclease) of an organism that causes food poisoning--Staphylococcus aureus. The new screening method will enable government and industry to control the intermittent problem of staphylococcal food poisoning from fermented sausages such as pepperoni and Italian or hard salami.

Because the test does not destroy the sausage (which is expensive) and is so fast and accurate, it could be used by industry for quality control and by private laboratories that service manufacturers. With the test, laboratories will be able to accurately screen 10 times as many samples each day.

Puerto Rican Plantains for School Lunches

More than 600,000 school children in New York City and Ft. Lauderdale and Tampa, Fla., will participate this fall in a USDA pilot program that will offer plantains from Puerto Rican infused with domestic orange juice. Plantains are a banana-like tropical fruit that is a staple food in Puerto Rico as well as in many parts of the Caribbean and Latin America.

The plantains with orange juice will supply carbohydrates, potassium, phosphorous, and vitamin C. At the same time, the purchase will lessen the surplus of plantains in Puerto Rico, meeting another USDA goal of developing markets for surplus agricultural products.

The receiving school districts--which have high numbers of people from the Caribbean and Central and South America--are interested in serving the plantains which will be delivered in early November.

For more information: Press Release #1563-80 (8-6-80).

Enforcing the Laws

The following are some recent actions taken by FSQS to protect the nation's food supply.

frozen beef recall



On June 7, FSQS recalled packages of frozen beef patties labeled "Mushroom Toppers" because the mushrooms in the product may have been contaminated. Waldmans Meats, Inc., New Castle, Pa., manufactured the patties and sold them in 2 lb. 3 oz. packages at their retail stores in Pennsylvania. The mushrooms in the patties were prepared by Emil Lerch, Inc. of Hatfield, Pa. On June 3, FDA announced recall of Lerch mushrooms in #10 cans produced since Feb. 1977. Investigations had indicated the mushrooms could be contaminated with botulinum toxin which causes botulism, a deadly food poison. Waldmans cooperated in the recall by removing the product in question from their stores and stopping further distribution. No illnesses were reported. Press Release #1184-80 (6-7-80).

adulterated ground beef

On May 27, two Mayfield, Ky., food retailers--Eugene Burgess and Robert T. Paschal--were fined for preparing and offering for sale ground beef adulterated with sulfite. Burgess, owner of Burgess Grocery, was fined \$500, and Paschal, owner of Paschal's Market, was fined \$300. FSQS Release (6-18-80).

misbranded meat

Edward Michael Petrilla, president and part owner of Edward's Food, Inc., doing business as Cattlemen's Meat Co., Longview, Texas, pleaded guilty to a third degree felony count of offering for sale and selling a misbranded meat product with intent to defraud. He was fined \$1,500 and placed on three years' probation. Based on the conviction, a USDA administrative law judge found the corporation unfit to engage in business under provisions of the Federal Meat Inspection Act and ordered meat inspection withdrawn.

counterfeit meat grading

Springfield Beef Co., Springfield, Mass., and its owners--Joseph Lavin and his brother, Louis Lavin--were sentenced on June 24, after pleading guilty to six counts involving wire fraud, misbranding, and possession and use of counterfeit USDA grading devices in 1978 and 1979. The company was fined \$10,000, and the Lavins were each sentenced to two years in jail (of which six months must be served), two years' probation, and fines of \$5,000 each. Press Release #1310-80 (6-27-80).

mislabeled livers

On June 18, Lakin Meat Processors, Omaha, Neb., and four of its officers were fined \$100 each after pleading guilty to relabeling boxes of beef livers as "calf livers" in Jan. 1979 and selling the mislabeled meat in commerce with intent to defraud. The officers were: Charles E. Lakin, president; Thomas Pribil, general manager; Charles E. Lakin III, stockholder; and William Winfield, head salesman. The firm also had to pay \$70 in court costs.

mislabeled franks

On June 26, Real Kosher Sausage, Inc., a meat processing plant in New York City, was fined \$1,000 after pleading guilty to the sale of adulterated and misbranded frankfurters in January 1979. Labeling on the product did not show it contained a soy derivative.

mislabeled beef

On May 27, Fruscione, Inc., a meat and poultry processing plant in Trenton, N.J., was fined \$4,000 after pleading guilty to preparing and selling approximately 200 pounds of mislabeled ground beef to institutions in New Jersey in Dec. 1978. The labeling did not show that the meat contained a soy derivative.

Other FSQS News

USDA urges consumers to avoid suspect Banquet brand turkey products. Press Release #1308-80 (6-26-80).

Banquet foods agrees to recall turkey products. Press Release #2322-80 (6-27-80).

Louis Rich Foods voluntary recalls turkey products. Press Release #1334-80 (7-1-80).

USDA proposes change in food container inspection standards. Press Release #1180-80 (6-6-80).

USDA proposes new rules for collectors of livestock lung byproducts. Press Release #1210-80 (6-12-80).



USDA seeks information on chilling poultry parts. Federal Register July 8. Comments due Sept. 8. Press Release #1356-80 (7-7-80).

USDA changes site for San Francisco, Calif., grading hearing. Press Release #1529-80 (7-31-80).

USDA to review regulations on grading dairy products. Press Release #1549-80 (8-5-80).

Agricultural Marketing Service

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service:

- Gathers and disseminates current information on prices, supplies, and other market data;
- Provides cotton and tobacco standardization, inspection, grading, classing, and testing services on request;
- Administers several regulatory programs designed to protect producers, handlers, and consumers from careless, deceptive, or fraudulent marketing practices;
- Administers marketing agreement and order programs to help establish and maintain the orderly marketing of milk, fruits, and vegetables;
- Provides patent protection to developers of certain novel plant varieties; and
- Monitors industry-sponsored and -financed research and promotion programs.

Good Forecast for September

Turkeys will continue to be plentiful in September while there will be somewhat fewer broiler-fryers available than there were this summer.

Food Forecast continued



Pork also will continue to be plentiful, and there will be enough beef to meet normal needs, according to the monthly Food Marketing Alert issued by USDA.

Food Marketing Alert, a capsule forecast of expected food supplies, reports the following foods will be plentiful in September: pork; turkey; fresh grapes, Bartlett pears, purple ("Italian") plums, lemons, and limes; raisins and dried prunes; canned spinach; peanuts; rice; dry beans; and--good news for split pea soup lovers--dry split peas. The 1980 dry split pea crop is expected to be 17 percent above last year's and 8 percent above the average for the past three years.

Foods expected to be in adequate supply are: beef; broiler-fryers; eggs; milk and dairy products; fresh peaches and nectarines; canned peaches, pears, and fruit cocktail; apples; oranges; citrus juices; potatoes; sweetpotatoes; onions; and overall supplies of canned and frozen vegetables.

Plums, except for purple plums, will be in light supply, since supplies from the large summer crop will be winding down.

Monthly issues of Food Marketing Alert--along with special issues that cover certain foods that are in temporary oversupply in the marketplace--are distributed to the news media. Consumers should watch for this information in the newspaper food pages, consumer broadcast programming, and Cooperative Extension Service bulletins.

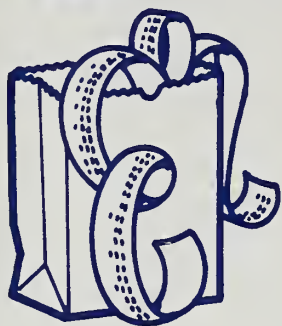
USDA also distributes Food Marketing Alert to people who communicate with consumers, but not to individual consumers. For a sample copy and order blank, write: Information Division, AMS, Rm. 3086-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Economics, Statistics, and Cooperatives Service

USDA's Economics, Statistics, and Cooperatives Service:

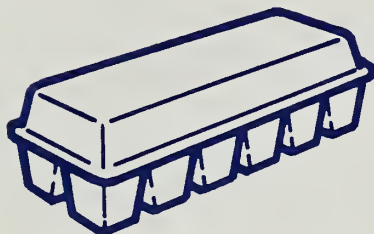
- Gathers and provides information on the agricultural economy;
- Analyzes international activities of agricultural significance;
- Does research on commodities, food and nutrition, cooperatives, natural resources, and rural development; and
- Furnishes timely and objective economic and statistical information to farmers and their cooperatives, other rural Americans, industries, consumers and policy-makers.

Higher Prices Ahead



Food prices have gone up little, on the average, so far in 1980. But a sharp rise is likely in the second half of the year, led by markups for beef, pork, and poultry--the very items whose prices had been falling earlier. Last fall, USDA economists predicted food prices for all of 1980 would rise 7 to 11 percent. Now a finer tuning puts the "most likely" range at 8 to 9 percent. That's below the inflation rate. Actual food expenditures this year may total \$21 billion, up about 9 percent from 1979, with over 95 percent of that gain due to rising marketing charges.

Confusing the Consumer with Dates



Those "Sell by 11/5" kind of notes that appear on some food products are clear enough, aren't they? Maybe not. Six large regional grocery retail chains operating in various areas of the nation responded to a survey about their "open dating" practices.

As it turns out, types of dates used by food chains are frequently unexplained. The type of date also varies, even for different packages of the same product. Some egg cartons, for instance, may carry expiration dates while other have "sell by" dates.

Moreover, simply a "June 6" may appear without explanation on a package. Should the product be sold or eaten by then? When asked for information on shelf lives and total product lives for 16 preselected products, two of the six responding firms indicated shelf lives but no product lives. And product life determined by one retailer may be two or three times that of another for the same item. For frankfurters, one firm said it was 22 days, while two others set it at 52 days.

Survey analysts conclude: Present efforts to convey freshness information are confusing and unfocused, although consumer complaints are fewer than before the efforts began.

For information on how the federal government plans to change food labeling regulations (including those pertaining to open dating), see page 2 of this issue of "Food News for Consumers" and page 1 of the Jan. 1980 issue. A summary of the government's Dec. 21, 1979, food labeling proposals is available from FSQS Information.

Food Bills of Rich and Poor Similar

According to an ESCS survey, the poorest Americans averaged about \$622 per person for food-at-home expenditures in 1979 while the wealthiest spent \$648, only 4 percent more. Although estimates about the poor are a little shaky because of their underrepresentation in the survey, they do jibe with a prior survey which found for 1973 remarkably little differences in such expenditures per person regardless of income group.

Expressed as a share of income spent on food, the poor spent a great deal more than the rich. Before-tax income spent on food at home in 1979 was about 25 percent for the poorest people in the survey; only 6.5 percent for the wealthiest. Adding to other food spending in restaurants and such, the percentages rose to 35 percent for the poorest and 9.5 percent for the wealthiest. The average share of before-tax spending on all food for all those in the survey was 15 percent.

Food and Nutrition Service

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service administers:

- The food stamp program;
- The national school lunch and school breakfast programs;
- The special supplemental food program for women, infants, and children (WIC); and
- The food distribution, child care food, summer food service, special milk, and food service equipment assistance programs.

USDA Rule on Competitive Foods Upheld



On June 27, the Department's rule restricting the sale of foods in competition with the school lunch and breakfast programs was upheld in court, and the rule went into effect on July 1 for 95,500 schools in the school lunch program.

Last Jan. 29, USDA published a rule that restricts the sale of foods of minimal nutritional value from the beginning of the school day to the end of the last lunch period. Foods of minimal nutritional value are defined as those which provide less than 5% of the U.S. RDA for any of the eight basic nutrients in an average serving and per 100 calories. ("Food News for Consumers," May 1980, page 9.) The restricted categories of food are soda water, water ices, chewing gum, and certain candies.

Two suits were brought against the rule--one by Community Nutrition Institute (CNI) and another by the National Soft Drink Association (NSDA). CNI said the rule didn't go far enough, and NSDA felt the Department has exceeded its statutory authority in making the rule.

The judge who made the ruling upholding the Department's regulation said, "The Secretary has in the main performed an arduous task in a responsible manner. His choice of four classes of foods based on broad, undisputed evidence of their minimal nutritional value is a reasonable first step." He also stipulated that USDA conduct further study of the health risks and benefits associated with consumption by school children of competitive foods containing saccharin. The judge's ruling also stated that USDA could not exempt fortified foods from any of the restricted categories of food.

New Food Stamp Law

In May, President Carter signed food stamp legislation that increases the program's funding to respond to unemployment and inflation. At the same time, it tightens eligibility and will remove 800,000 people from the program over the next year. Annual costs will be reduced by at least \$600 million, and the potentially eligible population will be reduced by 3 million people.

Under the new law's funding authority, Congress can appropriate up to \$9.491 billion for 1980 and \$9.739 billion for 1981. Previously, the ceilings were set at \$6.188 billion and \$6.236 billion respectively. The new authorization and additional funds came in time to prevent a threatened delay or suspension of stamps because of insufficient funds.

Several program changes, on which regulations have already been issued, will cause 650,000 people with incomes near the poverty line to lose their eligibility for food stamps in fiscal year 1981. Also, cost-of-living adjustments have been changed from twice a year--Jan. 1 and July 1--to once a

Food Stamp Law continued



year--Jan. 1; and the cost-of-living increase for July 1 was cancelled. As a result, the maximum net income limit for a family of four, for example, will be kept at \$7,450 and will not be updated to \$8,200 as had originally been scheduled.

Other recent regulatory changes based on the law will:

- Require food stamp recipients to have fewer assets. The new law lowers the allowable assets of participating food stamp households from \$1,750 to \$1,500 beginning Oct. 1. Households of two or more people, in which at least one person is elderly, will not be affected by the change. The assets limit for these elderly households remains at \$3,000.
- Remove 150,000 students from the program. Most of the 200,000 adult students (over 18 and under 60 years of age) who now receive food stamps will be ineligible beginning Sept. 1. The only exceptions will be low-income students with disabilities or those who: (1) work more than 20 hours a week, (2) head households with dependents, (3) participate in a federal work-study program, or (4) are enrolled in a work incentive program under the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program.
- Exclude the counting of federal, state, and local energy assistance payments as income or resources in determining a household's eligibility for food stamps.

Further changes, proposed by USDA in the Aug. 12 Federal Register, would give states expanded authority to verify information provided by food stamp applicants. Comments on the proposal should be sent--by Oct. 13--to Alberta Frost, Deputy Administrator, FNS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Other changes in the law on which regulations have not yet been issued will: authorize USDA and the states to set up systems for cross-checking income information provided by applicants; provide for photo-identification cards in certain areas where USDA determines they would be useful in controlling fraud and abuse; increase the federal share of administrative cost payments for states with substantially reduced program error rates and hold states liable for high error rates; and allow for expansion of program benefits to women and children who live in shelters for battered women and who meet the eligibility criteria.



School Breakfast Program—A New Publication

The Department is currently working to expand schools' participation in the school breakfast program in an effort to assure that every school child has the opportunity to eat a good breakfast.

In April, the breakfast program was operating in 33,500 schools and was serving 3.6 million children daily. The school lunch program, by comparison, was operating in 95,600 schools and was serving 26.9 million children daily.

A Breakfast Update newsletter is part of this effort. The newsletter provides a forum for the exchange of information between readers and the breakfast program outreach team. The newsletter will also announce new publications, explain the latest regulations and legislation, and include other items of special interest.

If you would like a free copy of Breakfast Update, write to Breakfast Update, School Programs Division, FNS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.



Rules Proposed to Tighten Controls of Processed Donated Foods



The Department recently proposed regulations that would help it keep a closer watch on donated foods that large school districts and state agencies have commercially processed or repackaged. In recent years, the volume of USDA foods being processed has increased, and the proposed rules would give the Department specific controls to make sure that schools are getting full benefit from them.

Since the early 1970's, increased processing has helped expand donated food use from a limited number of commodities to a broad array of products processed from commodities. For example, donated flour might be processed into bread or pizza crusts. USDA estimates that today as much as one-fifth of donated foods are processed or repackaged before they are used.

Under the proposal, certain commercial foods that meet USDA standards can be substituted for donated foods during processing. In the past, some processors substituted inferior products for the commodities given to schools. However, under the proposal, processors must document that any foods they substitute are as good as or of better quality than the donated foods that go into the processed products.

Another provision allows commercial distributors to deliver processed products but make the processor accountable for the quality and quantity of the goods delivered.

The proposed regulations were published in the June 24 Federal Register. Comments on the proposal should be sent by Aug. 25 to Darrel Gray, director, Food Distribution Division, FNS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Science and Education Administration

USDA's Science and Education Administration:

- Plans and coordinates food and agriculture research, extension, and teaching efforts;
- Conducts federal research programs in the food and agricultural sciences;
- Communicates and demonstrates agricultural research results;
- Provides information and expertise needed by policy, regulatory, and action agencies of USDA and other federal departments; and
- Provides information systems and library services in the food and agricultural sciences.

Nutrients in Beef

A major comprehensive study to evaluate the nutrient content of beef has found that cooked beef has about 20 percent less iron than previously reported and except for fat content, the nutrients do not vary significantly in beef in USDA quality grades Prime, Choice, and Good.

"Although there is less iron in beef than we believed, it is still an excellent source of iron in the diet," according to USDA biochemist Katsuto

Beef continued



Ono. A 3-1/3 ounce serving of lean cooked beef supplies about 17 percent of the RDA (Recommended Dietary Allowance) of iron for women.

Other findings in the study which was conducted by USDA, university, and industry scientists were:

- After being cooked, beef still retained 33 to 70 percent of its thiamin and vitamin B6.
- Broiled and roasted cuts retained their nutrients about equally, while braised cuts lost the most nutrients.
- Beef retained almost 100 percent of its iron, zinc, copper, nitrogen, riboflavin, and cholesterol after cooking.
- USDA Prime grade beef had 12 percent fat in the lean; Choice, 8 percent fat; and Good, 6 percent fat.

Combine Protein Sources

The high quality protein in meat, fish, poultry, eggs, milk, and cheese can be combined with the lower quality protein in cereal and other grain products to reduce costs and provide adequate protein in the diet.

Animal proteins provide a better proportion of essential amino acids and therefore are rated highest in protein value, say USDA nutritionists. While legumes such as chick peas are excellent sources of protein, they are low in one or more essential amino acids.

To compensate, animal and vegetable proteins can be combined in dishes such as cereal with milk, macaroni and cheese, or beans and meat as in chili. Vegetable proteins can also be combined to improve the quality of the protein. Peanut butter sandwiches, beans with rice or tortillas, and soybeans with sesame seeds are examples of combinations that enhance protein quality.

Hidden Sugar



Consumers have far less control over the amount of sugar in their diets now than they did earlier in the century, according to USDA nutritionists.

Household use of sugar has declined from 52 pounds per person per year in 1913 to 22 pounds in 1978. However, during the same period, annual sugar use by the food and beverage industry increased from 27 to 70 pounds per capita.

Foods high in sugar can increase the risk of tooth decay. Since sugar adds calories and little or no nutrients, foods high in sugar tend to have fewer vitamins and minerals per calorie eaten.

Refined sugars and other sweeteners provided as much as 18 percent of the total calories in the average U.S. diet in 1979, USDA data show.

Those who wish to cut down on use of sugar should read ingredient labels on packaged foods. Often listed are not only sugar, but sucrose, fructose, lactose, glucose, dextrose, corn syrup, corn sweeteners, natural sweeteners, invert sugar, or honey. They all add up to sugar.

Sugar Content of Granola

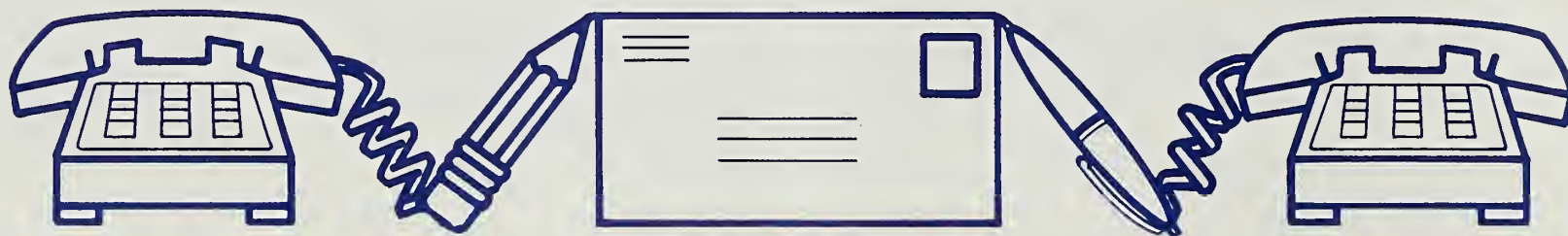
The sugar content of 14 nationally distributed granola cereals ranges from 22 to 32 percent of the product's dry weight, according to a USDA study.

This information is useful to consumers who want to compare the sugar content of granola with conventional cereals. A previous analysis of 62 regular breakfast cereals showed that their sugar content ranged from less than 1 percent to more than 50 percent. The granolas analyzed are near the middle of that range.

According to USDA research chemist Betty Li, wheat and other grains naturally contain very low levels of sugar--about one-half of one percent or less. Sugar in excess of this amount is either added during manufacture in the form of sweeteners or is in other ingredients such as fruits, nuts, or dry milk.

Fat Ratio Lowers Blood Pressure

Blood pressure was lowered when individuals ate equal amounts of polyunsaturated and saturated fats, as well as fewer total fats, in a USDA study. Polyunsaturated fats come primarily from plant oils while saturated fats are primarily animal fats. The USDA study showed that the 1:1 ratio of the types of fats eaten is the most important factor in lowering both systolic and diastolic blood pressure.



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"Food News for Consumers" is prepared for the U. S. Department of Agriculture by the Food Safety and Quality Service in cooperation with the Agricultural Marketing Service; the Economics, Statistics, and Cooperatives Service; the Food and Nutrition Service; and the Science and Education Administration. For more information contact: Office of Information and Legislative Affairs, Food Safety and Quality Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 3612-S, Washington, D.C. 20250. Phone: (202) 447-5223.

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